

# WORKING TOGETHER TO SUPPORT TRANSPORTATION EFFICIENT COMMUNITIES



Department of Commerce  
Innovation is in our nature.



WASHINGTON STATE  
DEPARTMENT OF  
ECOLOGY



Washington State  
Department of Transportation

## WHAT IS A TRANSPORTATION EFFICIENT COMMUNITY?

Transportation efficient communities support health, prosperous economies, energy conservation and a sustainable environment by requiring less driving to meet daily needs.

## How can cities and counties plan for compact growth?



*Seattle: Colman Dock, with ferry Tacoma in the slip for the Bainbridge Island route (left) and the ferry Walla Walla in the slip for the Bremerton route (right).*

### What is Compact Growth, and what does it look like?

Growth of cities that is compact is dense and not spread out into suburban or rural areas. Density is the total amount of activity occurring in an urban area. Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) defines density as “a measure of development within an area, measured in square footage of floor space per acre.” The denser the area, the closer the necessities of life, such as housing and employment are to each other. Regardless of transportation mode, reducing the distance between origins and destinations reduces total travel need (Washington State Department of Commerce, Transportation Planning Guidebook, Chapter 2).

### Why Should You Plan for Compact Growth?

Compact building design is necessary to support wider transportation choices, and provides cost savings for cities and counties. Minimum levels of density are required to make public transit networks viable. As well, on a per-unit basis, it is less expensive to provide and maintain services like water,

sewer, electricity, phone service and other utilities in more-compact neighborhoods than in dispersed communities.

We want to make our urban areas places where people want and are able to live, work and play – vibrant areas that meet communities’ needs. This requires careful planning to ensure adequate infrastructure and services are available to meet those needs, including mobility options.

The Environmental Protection Agency suggests that strategies to reduce VMT have additional benefits, including improving human health by enabling more walking and bicycling, improving efficient delivery of urban services such as domestic water, preserving surrounding farm and forest lands, and relieving traffic congestion.

### What are the benefits of compact growth?

Compact growth:

- Reduces the costs of public services and such as water, sewer, road infrastructure,

## Key Takeaways

- Direct new growth to existing urban areas and take advantage of existing infrastructure, complete streets, transit, walkable areas, a mix of land uses, and proximity to jobs.
- Planning compact growth and mixing land uses helps provide easier access to the necessities of life and brings them a little closer together.

## Tools and Resources

- [Commerce Growth Management Services](#)
- [Commerce Growth Management Services–Housing](#)
- [SEPA Handbook–Planned Actions \(Ch 7.4\)](#)
- [PSRC Regional Centers](#)
- [Washington Tracking Network Healthy Communities Indicators](#)
- [Smart Growth Assessment for Rural Communities](#)
- [Mixed-Use & Compact Development Mobile Workshop Series \(Delaware by Design\)](#)

police, fire, and emergency services.

- Supports mass transit and a wider array of non-motorized transportation options.
- Improves ambient air quality because vehicle-miles travelled generally decrease.
- Helps decrease fossil fuel consumption.
- Increases economic productivity by creating an employment density that attracts additional investment.
- Improves productivity by providing businesses with easier access to labor, suppliers, and supporting businesses.
- Helps businesses compete for labor because many professionals and recent college graduates prefer to live near their work and walk to shops, restaurants, and entertainment.
- Provides low-wage workers better access to affordable housing near jobs and transportation options.
- Helps businesses attract customers because people can reach their location in multiple ways.
- Helps those with limited mobility, special needs, or lower income be able to live, work, access medical services, and play more easily.

### How do you plan for compact growth?

- Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective.
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.
- Plan for attractive and walkable activity centers in your community.
- Plan for density and intensity around transit routes and increase alternative transportation mode opportunities that reduce the need to drive.
- Plan for housing that is affordable to all segments of the population and near job centers.
- Address urban design and provide amenities that make urban areas places where people want to live, work, and socialize.
- Use incentives to encourage higher density development and efficient infrastructure service (consider level of service standards, impact fees and regional stormwater facilities).
- Consider all opportunities for additional infill before considering expansion of Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) to accommodate new growth.
- Delay UGAs expansions until a city or jurisdiction is able to provide the additional area(s) with a full range of urban governmental services.

### What are some of the policies for implementing compact growth?

- [Comprehensive Plans—Urban Growth Areas—RCW 36.70A.110.](#) Counties that plan under the Growth Management Act are required to designate an urban growth area, which should be located first in areas already characterized by urban growth



#### Kenmore Village Update



*Kenmore Village Design Concept*

### Connection to State Policy

- [Comprehensive Plans—Urban Growth Areas—RCW 36.70A.110](#)
- [Growth Management Act—Procedural Criteria for Adopting Comprehensive Plans and Development Regulation—WAC 365-196](#)
- [Results Washington](#)
- [Results WSDOT](#)
- [Results Commerce](#)
- [Results Ecology](#)
- [Strategic Plan for 2014-2016 for Health](#)
- [Executive Order 14-04, Washington Carbon Pollution Reduction and Clean Energy Action](#)
- [GMA Mandatory Comprehensive Plan Requirements—RCW 36.70A.070\(1\)](#)

### Examples

- [Bellingham North State Street Design Concept](#)
- [Kenmore Town Center](#)

### For More Information

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- [Growth Management Act—Procedural Criteria for Adopting Comprehensive Plans and Development Regulation—WAC 365-196](#)

A framework for land use planning and the regulation of development in Washington state, through the Growth Management Act

- [GMA Mandatory Comprehensive Plan Requirements—RCW 36.70A.070\(1\)](#)

One of the requirements of a comprehensive plan is to include a land use element designating the uses of land, for agriculture, timber production, housing, commerce, industry, recreation, open spaces, general aviation airports, public utilities, public facilities, and others.



*Bellingham: Design Concept of North Street, Holly St. to Chestnut St.*

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